
WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA
NOVEMBER 28 – DECEMBER 4, 2010

This week has been declared winter weather preparedness week in North Carolina. All week long the National Weather Service will be issuing Informative messages to help you prepare for winter weather.

Today we will talk about the sometimes not so beautiful wonderland created by snow.

Citizen scientists wishing to report snow and rainfall amounts are encouraged to join the community collaborative rain...hail and snow network. Daily reports are sent via the internet and used by the National Weather Service and other agencies daily. To explore becoming an observer...please visit <http://www.cocorahs.org>.

Just a small amount of snow can adversely impact central North Carolina in a very short time. On average the coastal plain gets about 4 inches of snow per year...the triangle around 6 inches of snow and the triad 9 inches. However, the last several winters many areas have seen below normal snowfall. Due to the lack of recent experience responding to and coping with a winter storm the next big snow and ice fall could catch many residents off guard. It is best to plan now for winter storms this season.

Based on climatology most snow events in central North Carolina occur between 5 am and 2 pm. This is of course the critical time for school buses and commuting motorists. The timing of snow and ice is of particular concern since most winter storm deaths are the result of automobile accidents.

Heavy wet snow accumulations combined with wind can bring down trees and power lines. In rural areas...heavy snow can isolate people in their homes for days. Driving in snow can become very hazardous the very moment snow starts to stick to the road. About seventy percent of all winter related deaths occur in automobiles when cars slide on slippery roads causing accidents. With this in mind...when snow falls and roadways become dangerous you should only travel when absolutely necessary. Staying off the road during snow and ice also allows department of transportation crews time to clear and treat roads surfaces.

In many cases road conditions worsen the night following the snowfall. This occurs when low temperatures at night fall well below freezing allowing the snow on the road surface to freeze into ice. In these cases the road surfaces actually become more dangerous a night or two following the winter storm. These icy roads can also make morning commutes to schools and businesses very dangerous.

Preparing for the next winter storm before it happens is best. When snow is in the forecast...make sure that you have enough food and medicine at your house to last several days. Also make sure there is enough fuel for alternative heat sources such as fireplaces (wood or gas) and heaters. It is also helpful to have a full tank of gas in your car. Not only will this keep you from having to go the gas station during times of snow...it provides more weight to your car and can improve traction in snow.

Being prepared also means having the necessary information to make the right decisions. The Raleigh National Weather Service issues Winter Weather Advisories when 1 to 3 inches of snow is expected. When 3 or more inches of snow is forecast...Winter Storm Watches and Warnings are issued to protect life and property. These watches and warnings are issued as much as 48 hours in advance of the snow to allow the community and local governments to prepare and plan for the winter weather.

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